

February 6, 2020

**Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste
Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)**

Huffman Bar and Sultan Bar Gravel Extraction

41.8753° N, 124.1276° W

WDID 1A02143WNDN, CW-230793

Del Norte County

On January 21, 2020, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from Stuart Blanco, Tidewater Contractor, Inc. (Applicant), requesting federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (Certification) for activities associated with annual river-run aggregate extraction at the Huffman Bar and Sultan Bar sites (Project). A previous certification was issued for the project on December 7, 2010 (amended on October 24, 2012). No modifications to the project are proposed. The Project is located on the Smith River at 7390 South Bank Road, Crescent City, CA.

Project Description

The purpose of this Project is to continue ongoing annual extraction of river run material from Huffman Sultan Bars within the channel of the Smith River. Annual extraction volumes vary from year-to-year but shall not exceed 50,000 cubic yards at Huffman Bar and 25,000 cubic yards at Sultan Bar.

Extraction techniques may include alcove extractions, oxbows, narrow skims, shallow horseshoe extractions, and secondary channel skims. The preferred extraction methods will be determined each year during preparation of the annual gravel extraction plan.

Alcove Extraction

Alcove extractions are located at the downstream end of gravel bars where naturally occurring features provide velocity and thermal refuge to salmonids. Alcove extractions may be irregularly shaped to avoid disturbance to riparian vegetation and are connected to the low-flow channel at the downstream end to avoid stranding juvenile and adult salmonids as river flows rise and fall. Alcoves may be extracted to depths above or below the water table. Gravel will not be extracted from within the wetted channel; however, gravel extraction may occur in areas connected to the wetted channel for habitat enhancement purposes, including connecting alcoves to the Smith River.

Shallow Horseshoe Extraction

Horseshoe extractions typically involve removing material from the downstream two-third interior portion of a bar. Large horizontal and vertical buffers are maintained along the low-flow channel adjacent to the extraction site. To avoid head-cutting, extraction sidewalls must be at least a 6:1 slope, while the cut slope maintain a 2:1 slope. Horseshoe extractions are typically extracted to the depth of the 35-percent exceedance flow elevation but may go as deep as the water table. The 35-percent exceedance flow

is determined by USGS gauging station No. 11532500, when the gauge reads 2,900 cubic feet per second and approximately 8.14-feet gauge height.

Inboard Skim

An inboard skim is similar to a horseshoe extraction except it maintains a wider horizontal offset from the low flow channel where warranted. These areas would be excavated to a depth no lower than the water surface elevation offset, with a 0 to 0.5-percent cross slope, 1:1 sides-slopes, and a 10:1 slope at the head of the excavation. The horizontal and vertical offsets are intended to move the excavation area away from zones of frequent inundation. Inboard skims would have a 15-foot offset buffer from the bank. The excavation may extend into the upper one-third of the head-of-bar buffer if rationale is provided to show that protection of the upstream riffle would be maintained.

Narrow Skim

A narrow skim is an extraction adjacent to the low-flow channel with a width no greater than one-third the unvegetated, exposed bar width. A narrow skim follows the shape of the bar feature, and trends in the general direction of stream flow. Narrow skims would not be located adjacent to riffle habitat. The narrow skim would maintain a minimum vertical offset corresponding with the 35-percent exceedance level discharge. The finished narrow skim will be free draining and slope either toward the low-flow channel or in a downstream direction. The narrow skim will avoid the head of the bar, defined as the upstream one-third of the exposed bar surface, however, the head-of-bar buffer may be increased or decreased on a case-by-case basis provided the extraction area narrows, tapering smoothly to a point and remains below the upstream cross- over riffle.

Upstream Alcove

An upstream alcove may be proposed as an experimental extraction method on Sultan Bar. The base elevation at the upstream end of the extraction would be at or below the low flow water surface. The excavation centerline would be situated along the longitudinal midpoint of the bar and would be no more than one-third of the bar in width. Edge-of-water buffers would equal one-third of the bar width. The extraction would progress downstream on a flat slope and end at the highest point on the bar, but in no case extend into the downstream half of the bar.

Bridge Crossings

Access to the extraction sites may require up to three temporary stream crossings (bridges) per year.

The following measures would be employed, as appropriate, to ensure that impacts to aquatic resources from sediment-related inputs will be minimized during construction, use, and removal of the bridge crossings.

- Washed native gravels that are within the range of suitable spawning size for salmonids will be used for bridge approaches and abutments. Hand crews will be used where possible instead of equipment to install and remove these crossing materials.

- Concrete blocks will be used for temporary abutments to minimize the amount of native gravel required for crossings and will be removed along with the bridge deck immediately after extraction is complete. Abutments will be constructed in conjunction with the installation of erosion control fabrics and silt fencing which will minimize fine sediment inputs to the Smith River.
- When near the stream, specific temporary access road routes will be used to help reduce and minimize the accidental disturbance of fish habitat above and below the area required for actual construction of the stream crossing.
- Erosion control blanketing will be installed along all disturbed areas adjacent to the stream crossings so that sloughing of loose materials into the stream is reduced. This will occur adjacent to both wet and dry channels to prevent the accumulation of fine materials in the dry bed that would be delivered to the stream channel.
- Heavy equipment crossings will be restricted to two complete passes (per bridge) when installing and removing bridge deck and concrete block abutments.

Annual extraction planning is subject to review and approvals by National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Regional Water Board.

Project Timeline

Annual operations will occur between July 15 and October 15, annually. Extensions of the extraction season to October 31 are possible with agency approval and will be based on whether crossings are used, precipitation forecasts, river flow levels, and the presence of adult Coho salmon. All reclamation and restoration activities will be concluded prior to October 15 each year unless an extension is granted. A post-extraction survey of physical and biological conditions in the extraction locations will be conducted by November 1 of each year and post-mining surveys will be submitted to all agencies by December 31.

Receiving Waters

The Project would cause disturbances to waters of the U.S. and the state associated with the Smith River, within the Lower Smith River Hydrologic Unit No. 103.11.

Impacts

The proposed Project would result in temporary impacts to up to ten acres of streambed within the Smith River.

Mitigation

Mitigation may include two Recovery Actions detailed in National Marine Fisheries Service 2014 Final SONCC Coho Recovery Plan. The proposed recovery actions include increasing large woody debris, boulders, or other instream structure; and construction of off-channel habitats, alcoves, backwater habitat, and old stream oxbows.

Impacts to riparian vegetation from all extraction activities would be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Unavoidable impacts to riparian vegetation would be mapped

and fully quantified so that appropriate mitigation can occur. Mitigation amounts and location will be identified annually during the pre-extraction planning process.

Other Agency Permits and Actions

The Applicant has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a section 404 permit and to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for a Streambed Alteration Agreement.

CEQA

On April 24, 2000, Del Norte County, as lead agency for CEQA, completed a Negative Declaration (Del Norte County Gravel Mining Environmental Review - Various Projects) for the Project and filed a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 2000042093).

Public Comments

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this notice and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. Please contact Jake Shannon at Jacob.shannon@waterboards.ca.gov or (707) 576-2673 within 21 days of the posting of this notice if you have any questions or comments.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities. The Regional Water Board's project file includes the application for certification and additional details of the proposed project, including maps and design drawings. Project documents and any comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.

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